



parish newsletter

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year B) | 31 January 2021

Reflecting on the Gospel



these to give us inspiration, hope and an example of holy living.

We do not need to do what they did or even mirror their relationship with God. Each one of us is God's special creation, with a purpose and soul known only to us. We need to learn how to open up and bring, without compromise, our soulness to life. We know when someone is authentic and centred because they always point to truth, even though they struggle and sin themselves, and they embody an unspoken timeless wisdom that just sounds and feels right. Jesus taught with this same type of authority and it astonished many who listened. We do not need to move mountains, advance a cause, write books or become notable. All we have to do is become credible witnesses of the faith we profess. Moses-people can teach us how to do this.

St. Oscar Romero was an amazing man and a Moses-figure for sure. He

saw God in the burning bush and brought the flame of Gospel faith to the poorest of the poor, challenging the evils of the society in which he lived. He was tireless and persistent. He must have gotten very close to the problem because it cost him his life. He suspected it would. St. Romero said, "When we leave Mass, we ought to go out the way Moses descended Mt Sinai: with his face shining, with his heart brave and strong to face the world's difficulties." We can learn from this wisdom. If we allow the power of the Mass to truly transform us, we will leave that holy encounter changed. Our face will shine, and we will have courage. We can then bring what we have received to life's challenges. That sounds doable, doesn't it? Because of the example of our simple holiness, people will be amazed.

Most of us are quiet people who desire to live a good and holy life, promote the values and mission of the Gospel as best we can and desire to one day inherit the surprise of

life eternal God promises to us. We are not trail blazers. We are simple people who want to do the simple things of life well. But there are others who left a more profound im-

pact along the way of the paths they walked. Folks like Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Thomas Merton, Gandhi, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and many others left lasting impacts and

legacies. Like Moses, they show us by word and deed who God is and what integrity and a purpose-driven life look like. They show us how to be holy. We need Moses people like

Everyday Stewardship

Tracey Earl Welliver, MTS

It's officially one month since we popped the champagne, toasted 2021 and wrote down a list of resolutions. This is usually the time when we start to take a good, hard look in the mirror to assess what we have done—or have not done—with the first month of this brand-new year.

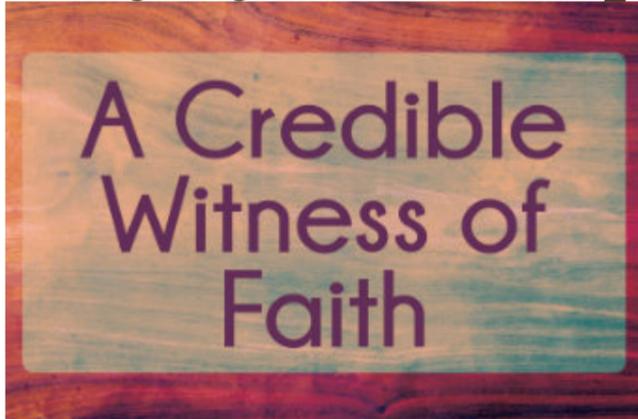
New years can be scary, can't they? Full of promise, sure, but also full of room for failure. Full of space for our old baggage, old fears and the continuation of old mistakes.

The same can be said of Christ, and the new life he offers us, if we are brave enough to accept it. Opportunities like that can be intimidating. In that moment, we might find ourselves like the man with the unclean spirit crying out: "What have you to do with me, Jesus

of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?"

Jesus is a comforter of the afflicted; he is a consoling figure, but he is also a challenging one. Sometimes we have grown attached to our afflictions. The idea of correcting bad habits or forming new ones is frankly terrifying to us. We have a voice deep inside who sees Christ and his invitation to repentance, and it cries out in fear: "I know who you are!"

When we live in the present, disavowing the baggage of the past or fear of the future, we submit ourselves to the promise of redemption. Let us be brave everyday stewards and invite Christ's healing power into our lives. We won't regret it — I'm sure the demoniac never did



*His teaching made a deep impression on them.
He taught with authority.*

Live the Liturgy

Inspiration for the Week

Most of us are not trail blazers. Throughout history though, there have been many folks who tirelessly and persistently pursued the promptings of their hearts without giving any care to what others thought or trends dictated. Jesus is one of them. St. Teresa of Calcutta and St. Francis of Assisi are examples of others. The rest of us are people who take a more measured look at things, want to test the waters, and take our time choosing what path or person to follow. We need credible witnesses of faith. We need the Moses people in our lives to show us

by word and deed who God is and what integrity and a purpose-driven life looks like. They are the pointers to truth, who even though they struggle themselves, seem to embody an unspoken timeless wisdom that just sounds and feels right. Jesus taught with this same type of authority and caught the attention of the greatest of sceptics. They were astonished. Even though we need our human prophets we can also be somewhat prophetic ourselves by putting integrity and conviction behind our embrace of the Gospel. Perhaps much to our surprise, we all have the power to be a credible witness. Are you willing to give it a try?



First Reading

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. (Dt 18)

Psalm

O that today you would listen to his voice! 'Harden not your hearts.' (Ps 94)

Second Reading

An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. (1 Cor 7:34)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children. Alleluia!

Gospel

The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. (Mk 1:22)

Masses this Week

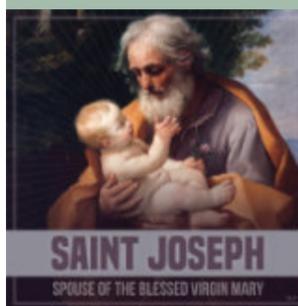
31	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME	Dt 18:15-20/Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9 [8]/1 Cor 7:32-35/Mk 1:21-28
	10.30	Mass St Mary's People of the Parish
	17.00	Mass St Mary's Sr Mary Bede (RIP)
1	Monday	Heb 11:32-40/Ps 31:20, 21, 22, 23, 24 [25]/Mk 5:1-20
	12.05	Mass St Mary's Alan Simpson (RIP)
2	The Presentation of the Lord	Mal 3:1-4/Ps 24:7, 8, 9, 10 [8]/Heb 2:14-18/Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22-32
	12.05	Mass St Mary's Tom Simmons (RIP)
3	Wednesday St Blaise; St Ansgar	Heb 12:4-7, 11-15/Ps 103:1-2, 13-14, 17-18a [cf. 17]/Mk 6:1-6
	12.05	Mass St Mary's Dinah Teresa & Gilbert Wilfred Burns (RIP)
4	Thursday	Heb 12:18-19, 21-24/Ps 48:2-3ab, 3cd-4, 9, 10-11 [cf. 10]/Mk 6:7-13
	12.05	Mass St Mary's Janice Connaughton (RIP)
5	Friday St Agatha	Heb 13:1-8/Ps 27:1, 3, 5, 8b-9abc [1a]/Mk 6:14-29
	12.05	Mass St Mary's Conor Colgan (RIP)
6	Saturday St Paul Miki and Companions	Heb 13:15-17, 20-21/Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 [1]/Mk 6:30-34
	11.00	Mass St Mary's Intentions of the family of Hazel & Glen Daroczy
	18:00	Vigil Mass St Cecilia's Linda Russell (RIP)
7	FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME	Jb 7:1-4, 6-7/Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 [cf. 3a]/1 Cor 9:16-19, 22-23/Mk 1:29-3
	10.30	Mass St Mary's People of the Parish
	17.00	Mass St Mary's Mark Stones (RIP)

Parish Prayer for the Year of Saint Joseph

Almighty God, you have chosen Saint Joseph to be the mainstay of Jesus and Mary, the wise and faithful servant in whom they could trust.

We pray that he may be the guardian of our Parish and our families; that he may inspire with confidence those who seek his protection; that he may give security to those who work in the vineyard of your Son; and finally, that he may be a source of strength to us, who wish like him, to dedicate ourselves ever more fully to Christ's service, now and in times to come.

Amen.



Questions for the Week

First Reading: Moses taught the Israelites that God would send prophets to assist them in knowing His will. Why do you think people so often reject the prophetic message?

Second Reading: Paul speaks of the inevitability of anxiety in life. How does your faith assist you in handling what makes you anxious?

Gospel: In the story of the healing of a demon-possessed man, Mark reports how the demons knew Jesus' true identity as "the Holy One of God." What does this reveal about the unseen order?



News & Announcements

Parish Pastoral Council

This Sunday the new Parish Pastoral Council will meet for the first time. The council is made up of representatives from different communities and ministries in the parish. You can see the full list of members on the parish website. The pastoral council is charged with listening to the voices of the parishioners and the Holy Spirit and discerning God's will for how our parish grows and develops in the future.

As we hope to move out of lockdown and release some of the restrictions on our gathering in the next weeks and months we need to be ready to face the new opportunities the post-Covid world brings. In particular we being ready to reach out to members of our community in need: those who go to Mass, those who have stopped and who don't even identify as Catholic.

In Jesus, we believe we have the words of eternal life. As the Catholic Community at the centre of Sunderland it is our responsibility to speak those words. What is it that Jesus wants us to say to the people of this city? Please pray for the members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

Flock Notes

Omnia fac cum consilio, et post factum non pœniteberis. (Do everything with advice and afterwards you will not regret it.)—that's the advice of St Benedict in his *Rule* to monks on how they should regulate their lives and live together in community. He also made it a rule that at gatherings of monks to discuss important matters the youngest members of the community had to be heard: the older, more senior monks, were not to ignore them.

This Sunday we are having our

first meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council: twelve members of our community who together will pray for the parish and seek to discern where the Holy Spirit is calling us.

Listening and discerning what God wants is not just essential for the health of our parish, it is essential for our personal spiritual health as well. St Benedict understood that no one person can know everything and no one person can have a monopoly on the truth—even when it concerns themselves—that's the grace of community.

Of course, whom you listen to for

New System for Leaving Church

To prevent the build up of people at the back of the Church after Mass and to help maintain safe social distancing, please remain in your pew after Mass until the stewards invite you to leave.

Email Newsletter

Sign up on our Facebook page to get the newsletter emailed to you every week. Alternatively, you can download it and read back issues on the parish website at sunderlandcatholic.com.



Student Chaplaincy

The University Chaplaincy events are all online for now, just email Mary (lay chaplain) for more information: sunderland.chaplaincy@rcdhn.org.uk or to join the student WhatsApp group. The chaplaincy is here to support you during your time in Sunderland, so just get in touch if you need a chat.

Every week: **Monday Morning Prayer 9am** • **Tuesday Games Night 7pm** • **Thursday Cathsoc Prayer/Social 6pm**

advice is as important as the advice they give. There is no shortage of self-professed gurus out there willing to tell us what to think or believe and lots of their well-intentioned advice will lead us straight off the precipice.

Hearing the voice of God in the midst of a cacophony of other voices is not easy, but God really wants us to hear him. The question is: are we willing to listen to God, even if what he says is not what we always want to hear?



Why do we do that?

Catholic life Explained

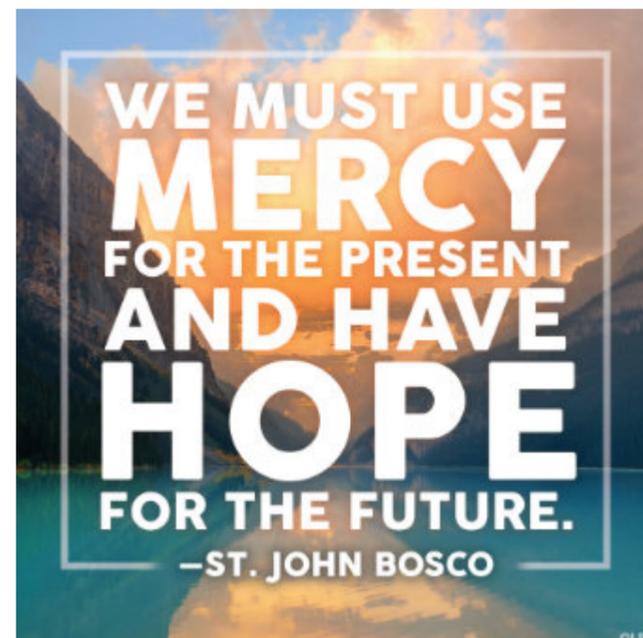


Question: I get annoyed with myself when I am distracted while I pray. Is it a sin? How can I be more attentive?

Answer: The mind is a marvellous and complex thing, producing amazing

thoughts, images, wisdom and inspiration. Yet at times it is like a two-year-old: it does not follow directions, does what it wants and loves to tell us "no!" This is probably the oldest and most common problem in the spiritual life—dealing with distraction. It comes in all forms: good intentions forgotten, wandering thoughts at Mass, daydreaming, etc. A little poem says it all: When the soul begins to pray, the brain always wants to play!

There are many ways to handle distractions. If we are distracted by thoughts about our families or friends, we should pray for them. If we lose our focus, we need just "re-collect" ourselves. If some worry or concern just won't leave our mind, then we deal with it and come back to prayer or make it part of our prayer. And when words just won't come, the only prayer we might offer is our presence, our suffering, and our desire to be close to the Lord. Most importantly, we need to be patient with ourselves. These things are not sinful, but reminders of our human frailty. Our weaknesses and good efforts are all acceptable to God, who reads the love in our hearts and the good intentions of our minds.



Our Lady of Mercy Parish • 27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ • (0191) 567 5354 • sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk www.sunderlandcatholic.com

St Mary's Church • 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ • **St Cecilia's Church** • Ryhope Road • Sunderland • SR2 7TG

Fr Christopher Hancock MHM JCD, Parish Priest • christopher@sunderlandcatholic.com

Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHM, Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk

Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon

Canon Alexander Barras, Priest in Residence



A parish of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
Reg Charity 1143450

